

President Tayyip Erdogan Now Claims Syria's Idlib Province Belongs to Turkey

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On February 26th, Turkey's President, told his Islamist political party that Idlib, which is the most heavily jihadist of all of Syria's provinces and the province where Syria had been sending jihadists who had been defeated but not killed by the Syrian army elsewhere in the Syrian war, is now permanently under Turkey's protection, and belongs to Turkey — Turkish territory. Russia's RT news headlined on the 26th, [“We're the hosts there': Erdogan says Turkey won't pull back from Syria's sovereign territory, gives Assad ultimatum to retreat”](#), and reported that,

The Turkish leader has ruled out withdrawal from Idlib, where his forces are backing militants fighting the Syrian Army. He also gave Damascus an ultimatum to retreat beyond Turkey's observation posts placed on Syrian soil.

“We will not step back in Idlib. We are not the guests in this realm, we are the hosts,” Recep Tayyip Erdogan told a meeting of his AK party on Wednesday. Vowing to bring “the regime's attacks” to an end, Erdogan said Ankara is giving Damascus time to pull forces back from Turkish observation posts.

The very next day, on the 27th, the Turkish English-language newspaper *Yeni Safak* bannered [“Situation in Syria's Idlib 'in favor of Turkey': Turkish president says Turkey has also reversed situation in Libya, which was previously in favor of Libyan warlord Haftar”](#) and they reported that Erdogan saw signs that Turkey was introducing new international realities in both Syria and Libya.

Later on the 27th, RT headlined [“33 Turkish soldiers confirmed killed in Idlib airstrike as Erdogan chairs emergency meeting on Syria”](#) and reported that “Turkish officials attributed the strike to the Syrian military.” However, any Turkish retaliation against Syrian forces would not only be met by Russian defense of Syrian forces but would be clearly a Syrian response to Turkish aggression and therefore any U.S. involvement supporting Turkey in this matter would be America's participating in Turkey's blatantly illegal grab for Idlib. Even America's allies in Europe and elsewhere might then turn away from the U.S., and away from Turkey.

This extraordinarily assertive position by Erdogan results from the sequence of events that will be described here:

U.S. President Donald Trump and U.S. allies made unequivocally clear in late August and early September of 2018 that if Syria and Russia would try to restore Syrian Government control over Syria's Idlib Province, then the U.S. and its allies would greatly escalate their

war against Syria's Government. For example, [on 3 September 2018, Trump tweeted](#), "President Bashar al-Assad of Syria must not recklessly attack Idlib Province. The Russians and Iranians would be making a grave humanitarian mistake to take part in this potential human tragedy. Hundreds of thousands of people could be killed." South Front [reported, the following day](#), that,

Trump's tweet comes as Iran's foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif at the start of his visit to Damascus said that "terrorists must be purged" from the province and Idlib in its entirety must be returned under government control.

"Syria's territorial integrity should be safeguarded and all tribes and groups, as one society, should start the reconstruction process, and the refugees should return to their homes," Mr Zarif said.

Zarif met with President Assad and the Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem. They mostly discussed the expected September 7th summit, which will happen in Tehran. Russian, Turkish, Syrian and Iranian leaders are supposed to meet and discuss the situation in Idlib.

A statement from Assad's office said that Iran and Syria "had similar views on the different issues" that are to be discussed.

On 10 September 2018, I [wrote](#) that "Unless Syria will simply hand its most heavily pro-jihadist province, Idlib, to adjoining Turkey, which [claims to have 30,000 troops there and is planning to add 20,000 more](#)," there would be a war between NATO member Turkey, which has invaded there, *versus Russia*, which — at Syria's request — has been assisting Syria's Government to conquer all of Syria's jihadists. Syria's Army has gradually liberated and retaken most of Syria's territory from jihadists, but had been using Idlib Province as a collection-area for the ones who were holding Syrian civilians as human shields. Syria was [bussing into Idlib the tens of thousands of jihadists that surrendered](#). This was being done so as to minimize the numbers of civilians who would be killed when Syria's army would retake an area, under Russian air-cover. This would allow the civilians there to escape to Syrian-Government-held territory, and the armed forces of Syria and Russia then to move in and slaughter the jihadists who remained there, so that Syria would retake that area from [the U.S.-backed jihadists](#).

Then, seven days later, I headlined ["Putin and Erdogan Plan Syria-Idlib DMZ as I Recommended"](#), and reported that,

Russia's President Vladimir Putin and Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan jointly announced on September 17th in Tehran, ["We've agreed to create a demilitarized zone between the government troops and militants before October 15. The zone will be 15-20km wide,"](#) which compares to [the Korean DMZ's 4-km width](#).

Though the understanding that Erdogan had reached with Iran's President Rouhani and with Russia's President Putin was that this would be only a temporary measure in order to get the U.S. and its allies to cease threatening World War III if Syria and Russia promptly let loose and slaughtered the 'rebels' in Idlib (Americas's previous main fighters to defeat and replace Syria's Government), Erdogan soon presented clear indications that he actually wanted to seize Syrian territory and to get as much of it as he could — that his goal in Syria

included expanding Turkey into Syria. His temporary policing function, as agreed-to by Russia, to isolate and not allow to escape the defeated jihadists who had become trapped there, turned out to be far more than that: it turned out to be Erdogan's *protection* of those jihadists.

On September 25th of 2018, I bannered [“Turkey Now Controls Syria’s Jihadists”](#), and presented the historical background behind this. Then, on 14 July 2019, I headlined [“Turkey Will Get a Chunk of Syria: An Advantage of Being in NATO”](#), and explained that because of NATO's backing of Turkey's seizure of Syrian territory, Turkey was already committed to the construction of Syrian branches of Turkey's Gaziantep University and of Turkey's Harran University, as well as of building supportive infrastructure for those facilities — absorbing portions of northern Syria into Turkey.

So, this has been a gradual process, and now Erdogan, backed by U.S. President Trump and by NATO, will be saving the lives of the tens of thousands of jihadists (plus their families) who had been defeated elsewhere in Syria, and who thus will avoid what the U.S. and its allies had warned would be a ‘humanitarian crisis’ of mass-slaughtering those defeated jihadists (which the U.S. and its allies still call ‘Syrian rebels’ — even though most of them aren't even Syrian).

As I noted in the 14 July 2019 article:

At that time, just prior to the Tehran conference — and this was actually the reason why the conference was held — [the U.S. and its allies, and the U.N., were demanding that an all-out invasion of Idlib, which had been planned by the Governments of Syria and of Russia, must not take place, for ‘humanitarian’ reasons](#). There was all that ‘humanitarian’ concern (led by the United States) for the world's biggest concentration of Nusra and Nusra-led jihadists — and for Syria's most jihadist-supporting civilian population. So much ‘kindness’, such ‘admirable’ ‘humanitarianism’. Furthermore the U.S. Government was threatening to greatly increase its forces against Syria if that invasion by Syria and by Russia into Idlib (which is, after all, part of Syria — so, what business is it, even of the U.N., at all?) were to be carried out. The Tehran conference was meeting in order to resolve that emergency situation (mainly America's threats of a possible war against Russia), so as to forestall this attack.

Trump's backing of Turkey's aggression was taking the United States even deeper into his predecessor, Barack Obama's, support of jihadists [in order to overthrow Syria's non-sectarian Government and install one that would be acceptable to the fundamentalist-Sunni Saud family who own Saudi Arabia](#).

And now Erdogan again is threatening Russia with WW III if Russia continues to defend Syria's sovereignty over Idlib — [Syria's most-jihadist province](#).

On February 26th, *Yeni Safak* bannered [“Turkey will never compromise on Sochi deal for Syria, says Erdoğan”](#); so, Erdogan is openly threatening WW III if Russia and Syria resist Turkey's seizure of Idlib and protection of its many thousands of jihadists.

Although the U.S. has led this apparent victory for jihadists and for international aggression, Turkey's Erdogan has been its spearhead. Russia and Iran had not agreed to this. Certainly, Syria's leader, Bashar al-Assad, hadn't agreed to anything like this outcome.

Turkey, in its 10 September 2018 agreement with Russia and with Iran, had committed itself to separating-out and killing the jihadists; but, instead, Turkey has been protecting them, and now will be absorbing them, and taking Idlib Province from adjoining Syria. As recently as [22 October 2019, Erdogan had promised Putin in Sochi](#) that “The two sides reiterate their commitment to the preservation of the political unity and territorial integrity of Syria,” and that, “They emphasize their determination to combat terrorism in all forms and manifestations and to disrupt separatist agendas in the Syrian territory.” *Yeni Safak’s* February 26th article opened “Turkey will never compromise on the Sochi deal on embattled Idlib, Syria and it expects the deal to be implemented, said the country’s president on Wednesday.” Turkey “expects the deal to be implemented” *while blatantly violating it*.

[Brett McGurk](#), a leading neoconservative in the Administrations of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump, admitted, on 27 July 2017, that “[Idlib Province is the largest Al Qaeda safe-haven since 9/11, tied directly to Ayman al-Zawahiri,](#)” and that “to send in tens of thousands of tons of weapons and looking the other way as these foreign fighters come into Syria, may not have been the best approach,” but yet the U.S. regime continues that approach, and backs Turkey’s grab of Idlib and protection of those jihadists.

Previously, McGurk had been U.S. President Barack Obama’s special envoy for the anti-Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) coalition. He had supported jihadists led by al-Nusra (Syrian branch of Al Qaeda) and supported separatist Kurds in Syria, to overthrow Syria’s Government. Even the liberal (or Democratic Party, pro-Obama) neoconservative *Washington Post* [had not hidden the fact that](#) “The U.S. team, headed by senior White House adviser Robert Malley and State Department envoy Brett McGurk” had informed the newspaper that “Russia was said to have rejected a U.S. proposal to leave Jabhat al-Nusra off-limits to bombing as part of a cease-fire” — the fact that Obama was **actually protecting those jihadists** (though *not* protecting ISIS or ‘ISIL’). Obama backed al-Qaeda there, and so does Trump. However, when Trump ran for the Presidency in 2016, he promised to reverse Obama’s obsession to overthrow Syria’s President Bashar al-Assad. That, and similar promises he made, were antithetical to the most-basic commitments of the U.S. Establishment. They became his implacable enemies.

Finally, on 10 November 2016, right after Trump’s election, that same newspaper, the *WP*, bannered “[Obama directs Pentagon to target al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria, one of the most formidable forces fighting Assad](#)” and, without noting that Obama had *supported* that “al-Qaeda affiliate” until then, but instead falsely reporting that “the administration had largely ignored until now” it, said: “While Obama, White House national security adviser Susan E. Rice, Secretary of State John F. Kerry and special presidential envoy Brett McGurk agreed with [the super-neoconservative Obama Secretary of Defense Ashton] Carter on the need to keep the focus on the Islamic State, they favored shifting resources to try to prevent al-Nusra from becoming a bigger threat down the road.” That was extreme euphemism, coming from this extremely neoconservative liberal newspaper. Actually, [Obama had built his overthrow-Assad operation mainly upon al-Nusra, to train and lead the tens of thousands of foreign jihadists who had been pouring into Syria](#). The *Washington Post* was one of the most lying, deceptive, newspapers reporting anywhere in the world about international relations, very heavily slanted neoconservative — in favor of expanding the U.S. mega-corporate empire. [Whereas the separatist Kurds were America’s main proxy-army fighting in Syria’s northeast, al-Nusra led America’s proxy-armies everywhere else in Syria](#). That 10 November 2016 *WP* article also asserted “But aides say Obama grew frustrated that more wasn’t being done by the Pentagon and the intelligence community to kill al-Nusra leaders

given the warnings he had received from top counterterrorism officials about the gathering threat they posed.” That’s another lie, because [Secretary of State John Kerry had actually fought inside the Administration against Obama’s policy on that, and the policy came from Obama himself — and NOT from his subordinates \(such as Ashton Carter\)](#), as that lying newspaper alleged. The article referred to “the expanded push against al-Nusra” — but here is the reality: [by no later than December 2012 Obama had settled upon al-Nusra to lead America’s overthrow-Assad campaign inside Syria](#). And [the reason for that has very deep historical roots — all hidden from the American public](#). Instead of such realism, that propaganda-organ, in its article on 10 November 2016, wrote:

A bitterly divided Obama administration had tried over the summer to cut a deal with Moscow on a joint U.S.-Russian air campaign against al-Nusra, in exchange for a Russian commitment to ground Syrian government warplanes and to allow more humanitarian supplies into besieged areas. But the negotiations broke down in acrimony, with Moscow accusing the United States of failing to separate al-Nusra from more moderate rebel groups and Washington accusing the Russians of war crimes in Aleppo.

‘Humanitarian’. How stupid does the owner of the *Washington Post* think that the American public is in order for it still to believe that its Government really cares about being “humanitarian” around the world — *especially* in countries it’s trying to conquer, such as Iraq, Iran, Syria, Venezuela, Bolivia ...? Really? He thinks it’s *that* stupid? Or, does he think his newspaper can help to make them **so misinformed**?

That rabidly anti-Russian newspaper continued there:

Russia had accused the United States of sheltering al-Nusra, a charge repeated Thursday in Moscow by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

“The president doesn’t want this group to be what inherits the country if Assad ever does fall,” a senior U.S. official said. “This cannot be the viable Syrian opposition. It’s al-Qaeda.”

Officials said the administration’s hope is that more-moderate rebel factions will be able to gain ground as both the Islamic State and al-Nusra come under increased military pressure.

The article also featured a headline and link to their 9 November 2016 news-story, [“Intelligence community is already feeling a sense of dread about Trump”](#). Even back then, the Democratic Party’s billionaires were pumping their agents’ allegations which would lead to Russiagate, the Mueller Report, and ultimately to Ukrainegate and Trump’s impeachment for being insufficiently supportive of [President Obama’s 2014 coup and conquest of Ukraine, which Obama had started planning by no later than 2011](#). All of that was a warning to any current or future U.S. President, that to buck the collective will of America’s billionaires is to commit political suicide. It doesn’t make any difference what the President’s Party is — the dictate, from the billionaires, applies to *any* U.S. President. This ‘restored Cold War’ is nothing of the sort — on the U.S. side, the war [secretly continued uninterrupted, even after the Soviet Union ended its communism, and its Warsaw-Pact mirror of America’s NATO military alliance](#).

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